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ABSTRACT

This module, one of a series of 127 performance-based teacher education learning packages focusing on specific professional competencies of vocational teachers, covers improving one's communication skills in order to deal more effectively with special needs students. Included in the module are learning experiences that address the following topics: keeping the lines of communication open, mastering communication skills (being active, honest, fair, and understandable); mastering the techniques of active listening; assessing students' communication needs; identifying possible communication difficulties that various special needs students might experience; and developing strategies to help students overcome these difficulties. Each learning experience contains one or more learning activities and a feedback activity. (MN)

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MODULE

L-8

Improve Your Communication Skills

Module L-8 of Category L—
Serving Students with Special/Exceptional Needs
PROFESSIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION MODULE SERIES

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FOREWORD

This module is one of a series of 127 performance-based teacher education (PBTE) learning packages focusing upon specific professional competencies of vocational teachers. The competencies upon which these modules are based were identified and verified through research as being important to successful vocational teaching at both the secondary and postsecondary levels of instruction. The modules are suitable for the preparation of teachers and other occupational trainers in all occupational areas.

Each module provides learning experiences that integrate theory and application; each culminates with criterion-referenced assessment of the teacher's (instructor's, trainer's) performance of the specified competency. The materials are designed for use by teachers-in-training working individually or in groups under the direction and with the assistance of teacher educators or others acting as resource persons. Resource persons should be skilled in the teacher competencies being developed and should be thoroughly oriented to PBTE concepts and procedures before using these materials.

The design of the materials provides considerable flexibility for planning and conducting performance-based training programs for preservice and inservice teachers, as well as business-industry-labor trainers, to meet a wide variety of individual needs and interests. The materials are intended for use by universities and colleges, state departments of education, postsecondary institutions, local education agencies, and others responsible for the professional development of vocational teachers and other occupational trainers.

The PBTE curriculum packages in Category L—Serving Students with Special/Exceptional Needs—are designed to enable vocational teachers and other occupational trainers to create learning environments that are accessible, accommodating, and equitable in meeting the instructional needs of individuals in those groups previously denied equal vocational education opportunities. The modules are based upon 380 teacher competencies identified and verified as essential for vocational teachers to meet the special needs of all students in their classes. Included are special populations such as the handicapped, adults pursuing retraining, and students enrolled in programs that are nontraditional for their sex.

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to the research, development, testing, and revision of these significant training materials. Appreciation is extended to the following individuals who, as members of the project technical panel, advised project staff, identified human and material resources, and reviewed draft materials: James B. Boyer, Ken Dieckhoff, Mary M. Frasier, Gerald R. Fuller, Juan Guzman, Jerry Holloway, Barbara Kemp, Jeffrey G. Keily, Betty Ross-Thomson, Ann Turnham-Smith, and Richard Tyler.

Appreciation is also extended to the approximately 80 vocational teachers and supervisors from throughout the United States who served on the eight DACUM analysis panels that assisted National Center staff in the initial identification of the teacher competency statements. Appreciation is extended, too, to the 80 additional teachers and supervisors from throughout the United States who assisted in the verification of the 380 competencies.

Field testing of the materials was carried out with assistance of field-site coordinators, teacher educators, students, directors of staff development, and others at the following institutions: University of Alabama–Birmingham; Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute, New Mexico; University of Central Florida; University of Southern Maine; Maricopa County Community College District, Arizona; Murray State University, Kentucky; University of New Hampshire; SUNY College of Technology–Utica, New York; Temple University, Pennsylvania; Texas State Technical College; Upper Valley Joint Vocational School, Ohio; and Central Washington University.

Special recognition for major individual roles in the development of these materials is extended to the following National Center staff: Lucille Campbell-Thrane, Associate Director, Development Division, and James B. Hamilton, Program Director, for leadership and direction of the project; Lois G. Harrington, Karen M. Quinn, and Michael E. Wonacott, Program Associates, for training of module writers and module quality control; Cheryl M. Lowry, Research Specialist, for developing illustration specifications; Kevin Burke and Barbara Shea for art work; Nancy Lust, Research Specialist, and Wheeler Richards, Graduate Research Associate, for assisting in the coordination of module field testing and data summarization; and Catherine C. King-Fitch, Program Associate, for revision of the materials following field testing. Special recognition is also extended to George W. Smith Jr., Art Director at AAVIM, for supervision of the module production process.

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THE NATIONAL CENTER
FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
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The National Center for Research in Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, preparation, and progression. The National Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research.
- Developing educational programs and products.
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes.
- Providing information for national planning and policy.
- Installing educational programs and products.
- Operating information systems and services.
- Conducting leadership development and training programs.

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The American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials (AAVIM) is a nonprofit national institute.

The institute is a cooperative effort of universities, colleges and divisions of vocational and technical education in the United States and Canada to provide for excellence in instructional materials.

Direction is given by a representative from each of the states, provinces and territories. AAVIM also works closely with teacher organizations, government agencies and industry.

INTRODUCTION

As a vocational-technical teacher, you are responsible for communicating your subject matter to your students. You have, or will have, at your disposal the competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that comprise technical expertise in your occupational specialty. Communicating these competencies to your students is an essential step in helping them develop their own occupational skills.

However, some students with exceptional needs may be lacking in communication skills—may not be able to receive your message. Mentally retarded students or students with limited English proficiency, for instance, may have low English language skills. Adults in retraining programs or students enrolled in programs nontraditional for their sex may have well-developed language skills in general but may lack a basic technical vocabulary.

Minority or urban economically disadvantaged students may be perfectly competent in communicating with their peers using "street" English, but less able to communicate adequately using standard English, which is the language of the world of work in America. In addition, handicapping conditions can affect students' ability to communicate—the deaf student cannot hear a lecture, the blind student cannot see the chalkboard.

How can you communicate your subject matter to students in spite of these limitations?

Furthermore, many difficulties can arise in using nonverbal communication with students with exceptional needs. Students from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds may communicate nonverbally in ways to which you are not accustomed.

If, for example, you are a white, middle-class American, you will expect your students to look you right in the eye when talking to you. This indicates respect and honesty by your own standards. Yet some of your students may come from cultures in which people show respect and honesty by refraining from looking the other person directly in the eye.

How do you avoid the misunderstandings that are likely to occur when these two different ways of showing respect and honesty meet head-on?

This module is designed to give you skill in keeping the lines of communication open, so that you can communicate your technical content to students with exceptional needs.

ABOUT THIS MODULE

Objectives

Terminal Objective: In an actual teaching situation, improve your communication skills. Your performance will be assessed by your resource person, using the Teacher Performance Assessment Form, pp. 35–36 *(Learning Experience III)*.

Enabling Objectives:

1. After completing the required reading, critique the performance of a teacher in a given case script in communicating with students with exceptional needs *(Learning Experience I)*.
2. Given case situations describing two students with exceptional needs, identify possible communication difficulties these students might experience and strategies you could use to overcome these difficulties *(Learning Experience II)*.

Prerequisites

The modules in Category L are **not** designed for the prospective teacher with no prior training and/or experience. They assume that you have achieved a minimal level of skill in the core teacher competencies of instructional planning, execution, and evaluation. They then build on or expand that skill level, specifically in terms of serving students with special/exceptional needs.

In addition, to complete this module, you should have defined or redefined your educational philosophy to include your responsibility for serving students with exceptional needs; and you should have competency in identifying and diagnosing the needs of these students. If you do not already meet these requirements, meet with your resource person to determine what method you will use to do so. One option is to complete the information and practice activities in the following modules:

- *Prepare Yourself to Serve Exceptional Students*, Module L-1
- *Identify and Diagnose Exceptional Students*, Module L-2

Resources

A list of the outside resources that supplement those contained within the module follows. Check with your resource person (1) to determine the availability and the location of these resources, (2) to locate additional references within your occupational specialty, and (3) to get assistance in setting up activities with peers or observations of skilled teachers, if necessary. Your resource person may also be contacted if you have any difficulty with directions or in assessing your progress at any time.

Learning Experience I

Optional

Reference: Truax, Charles B., and Carkhuff, Robert R. *Toward Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy: Training and Practice*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967.

Reference: Hall, Edward T. *The Silent Language*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.

An actual teaching situation in which you can survey students to determine their communication needs.

One or more experienced teachers or others who work with students with exceptional needs whom you can interview about their problems and successes in communicating effectively with these students.

Learning Experience II

No outside resources

Learning Experience III

Required

An actual teaching situation in which you can improve your communication skills.

A resource person to assess your competency in improving your communication skills.

Terminology

Special/Exceptional Needs: Referred to in the modules simply as exceptional needs, this term refers to those needs that may prevent a student from succeeding in regular vocational education classes without special consideration and help. The following types of students are included in our definition of students with exceptional needs:

- Persons enrolled in programs nontraditional for their sex (e.g., the male in home economics)
- Adults requiring retraining (e.g., displaced homemakers, technologically displaced)
- Persons with limited English proficiency
- Members of racial/ethnic minority groups
- Urban/rural economically disadvantaged
- Gifted and talented
- Mentally retarded
- Sensory & physically impaired

General Information

For information about the general organization of each performance-based teacher education (PBTE) module, general procedures for its use, and terminology that is common to all the modules, see About Using the National Center's PBTE Modules on the inside back cover. For more in-depth information on how to use the modules in teacher/trainer education programs, you may wish to refer to three related documents:

The *Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* is designed to help orient preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers to PBTE in general and to the PBTE materials.

The *Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* can help prospective resource persons to guide and assist preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers in the development of professional teaching competencies through use of the PBTE modules. It also includes lists of all the module competencies, as well as a listing of the supplementary resources and the addresses where they can be obtained.

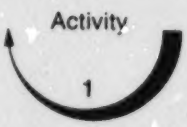
The *Guide to the Implemention of Performance-Based Teacher Education* is designed to help those who will administer the PBTE program. It contains answers to implementation questions, possible solutions to problems, and alternative courses of action.

NOTES

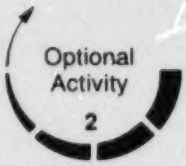
Learning Experience I

OVERVIEW

After completing the required reading, critique the performance of a teacher in a given case script in communicating with students with exceptional needs.



You will be reading the information sheet, Keeping the Lines of Communication Open, pp. 9–20.



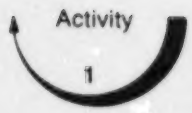
You may wish to read one or both of the following supplementary references: Truax and Carkhuff, *Toward Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy: Training and Practice,* pp. 285–293; and/or relevant sections of Hall, *The Silent Language.*

If you are an inservice teacher, you may wish to have your students complete an informal data sheet identifying communication problems they experience in class and to use this information to plan strategies for improving your communication skills.

You may wish to interview one or more experienced teachers or others who work with students with exceptional needs about their problems and successes in communicating effectively with these students.

You will be reading the Case Script, pp. 22–24, and critiquing the performance of the teacher described.

You will be evaluating your competency in critiquing the teacher's performance in communicating with students with exceptional needs by comparing your completed critique with the Model Critique, pp. 25–26.



For information on techniques you can use to keep the lines of communication open with students with exceptional needs, read the following information sheet.

KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Imagine that you are a caveman. You and some friends are lounging around the fire late one prehistoric evening. As the fire dies, your friends drop off to sleep. Suddenly, you see two gleaming eyes come out of the darkness toward your cave. Shadows take shape. Light from the dying embers glints off white fangs. A saber-toothed tiger.

You want to wake your friends to signal the danger. But you must be quiet. If the tiger doesn't realize you are there already, **you** don't want to be the one to let him know. A poke in the ribs to one friend doesn't get much response. The friend looks up, gives you a meaningful glare, and rolls over again. You try shaking another one. For this, you get a fist in the solar plexus.

Finally, in desperation, you throw caution to the winds. Even though you might attract the beast's attention, you let out a wild, piercing scream, "Gnlaoorfph!!!!" This works; your friends sit bolt upright. Something in your scream has conveyed alarm.

You point to the hungry monster, who now knows that dinner is nearby. At last, your friends get the message, and the campsite explodes into action. One throws twigs on the fire. Two more grab their clubs and spears, just in case. The rest start jumping around and uttering fierce cries.

The tiger, perplexed, begins to back away. You throw a burning stick from the fire at the beast. He turns tail and runs. You are safe.

Why did you and your friends almost become a midnight snack? It occurred because you were unable, at first, to **communicate** the danger to them. Unfortunately, language had not yet been invented. You couldn't just turn to the sleeping crowd and yell, "Rise and shine! It's Fang and he looks hungry."

You tried to wake them silently, but they figured you were clowning around. They misunderstood your actions. However, they did understand from your scream that danger was near. Your pointing to the tiger filled in the rest of the picture. At that point, you could all take action as a group.

This kind of communication problem still exists today. Even with the advantage of language, there are times when we cannot communicate what we mean. Sometimes **language itself** is the problem. You may use a word that others do not understand. You may write a sentence that is so complicated that the meaning gets lost. Or, you may be trying to communicate with someone who speaks a different language entirely.

On the other hand, a **message sometimes gets confused** even though your language is simple and clear. If you want to express affection to a friend, you might choose the words "I like you." Your message will only get through, however, if you use the appropriate tone of voice and gestures. If you say "I like you" in a sarcastic tone of voice while you roll your eyes and drum your fingers on the table, your friend might very well believe your actions instead of your words.

Communication is essential to you in your professional role as a vocational-technical instructor. Your main task as a teacher is to communicate the content of your subject to your students—to convey to them the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need on the job. Thus, you will communicate with your students all day, every day. Often you communicate with them when you are not even present. Some communications from you to your students are as follows:

- Outside reading assignment
- Handout given as outside assignment or for classroom work
- Lecture or demonstration
- Audiotapes or videotapes for student use
- Writing on the chalkboard
- Signs concerning safety and procedures
- Oral or written evaluations of student projects or performance
- Oral questioning of students

Likewise, your students communicate to you all day, every day. Some examples are as follows:

- Questions asked about class lessons
- Questions answered in class
- Oral or written explanations of plans for a project
- Requests for assistance or advice

You and your students even communicate without using language. A student communicates respect or anger, boredom or interest, by posture, gestures, and tone of voice. You communicate patience or impatience, approval or disapproval, by the same means.

In your classroom or laboratory, you will need to be particularly concerned about the effectiveness of your communication with students with exceptional needs. Many students with exceptional needs have communication difficulties that affect their ability to receive your vital content messages.

For example, a hearing-impaired student may be able to read and speak but unable to hear any classroom discussions, demonstrations, or lectures. Similarly, a visually impaired student may hear and speak with ease but run into problems with reading assignments. Students in programs nontraditional for their sex may have excellent communication skills in general but lack basic technical vocabulary in the occupational area. An adult in a retraining program may experience this same lack of basic technical vocabulary.

Students with limited English proficiency (e.g., a Chicano student from a Spanish-speaking family) may speak and understand English perfectly well but have difficulty reading. Minority and/or disadvantaged students may not be fluent in standard English, which is generally the language of the classroom and the world of work. A mentally retarded student may have low skills in all areas of communication.

These various communication difficulties concern you as a vocational teacher. You must be able to work within students' present abilities in order to convey your technical content and develop your students' occupational skills.

Furthermore, if students with exceptional needs have difficulty understanding you, logic tells us that you are likely to have difficulty understanding them. You may have experienced this sort of difficulty already. You may, for example, have known Hispanics whose English was limited and very difficult for you to understand.

Or, you may have encountered a minority or economically disadvantaged person who speaks a slightly different version of English that often leaves you scratching your head. You may have met a hearing- or speech-impaired person whose pronunciation was almost unintelligible to you or a gifted person whose vocabulary made you reach for the dictionary.

Since it is just as important for you to understand your students as it is for them to understand you, these difficulties need to be resolved. Communication breaks down whenever one of the people "communicating" doesn't understand. You need to help avoid this sort of breakdown, regardless of who is or isn't understanding.

Last, there are communication problems that arise simply because of **our attitudes toward "differences."** Dealing with someone from a different cultural background or race, for example, makes some people uncomfortable. It is easy, sometimes, to get the feeling that this other person operates by slightly different rules that you don't even know about. This feeling of discomfort often leads to a breakdown in communication, even when language itself is not a difficulty, simply because you are not sure of what the other person is thinking and feeling.

Of course, you cannot allow this sort of feeling to stop the communication in your classroom or laboratory. What can be done to avoid a breakdown and to keep the lines of communication open? Let's begin by taking a closer look at communication.

Communication Defined

Communication can be defined quite simply. It is a message going from a sender to a receiver. The message can contain information of almost any kind. Someone can tell you that one inch is equal to 25.4mm. You might read that your lawnmower engine develops 3.1 HP.

In your classroom or laboratory, many of your messages will concern the content of your subject. At the same time, however, some will concentrate on the relationships between you and your students.

A conversation you overhear between two students can tell you that they are bored in your class. A student might say that he/she is sorry for having disturbed your class. You may mention to your graduating seniors that you are happy for their sake.

Or, a student might tell you by frowning that your directions are unclear. If you pay students a compliment on their work, they will probably let you know they

are happy by smiling. When you ask a question in class, some students will show that they know the answer by raising their hands. Others will show that they don't know by concentrating on staring at the floor.

As we see from the previous examples, you can send or receive a message in two ways. When a message is sent **verbally,** language is used. The language can be either spoken or written. The message is said and heard, or written and read. When a message is sent **nonverbally,** other means are used. These include tone of voice, facial expression, posture, gestures, or actions. We can send (or receive) verbal and nonverbal messages at the same time or separately.

It is important to remember this fact so that you will be aware of all the messages—verbal and nonverbal—that you and your students send and receive. You need to be particularly sensitive to nonverbal messages because they often communicate attitudes or emotions that affect your personal relations with your students. Nonverbal messages often express what a person is really thinking or feeling more accurately than the words he/she uses.

Another important feature of communication is that it is a **two-way process.** Whenever you communicate, you communicate with someone. We have said that communication consists of a message going from a sender to a receiver. When you are introducing a unit to your class, you are the sender. The content of your unit is the message. Your students are the receivers. When students ask questions, they are the senders, the questions are the messages, and you are the receiver.

Consequently, you must take the two-way nature of the process into account in your classroom or laboratory. If any of the three items (message, sender, receiver) is missing, communication will not occur.

If the receiver is not concentrating on receiving, the message will not get through. If the message itself is unclear or illogical, it will not be understood. If the sender is unconsciously sending out conflicting verbal and nonverbal messages at the same time, the receiver will not know which to choose. The safe arrival of the message—understood by the receiver as it was meant by the sender—is the primary concern.

Communication Skills

There are many things that you, as a vocational-technical teacher, can do to ensure that communication does occur in your classroom. You can help the message arrive—intact and understood—by observing the following rules:

- Ensure that your own communication is **active, honest,** and **fair.** This applies whether you are the sender or the receiver of the message. It includes both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Ensure that verbal messages (spoken and written) you send to students are **understandable** to all the students in your class. You can gear your approach to your students' frames of reference. You can provide other means for communicating with students who cannot communicate well in standard English for any reason. And you can test for understanding to find out if you are being understood or not.

Be Active

Just what do we mean by active? If you're talking, isn't that active? If you're listening, isn't that active? Sometimes it is, but sometimes just talking or listening isn't active enough. While you are actively talking, you should **actively look for indications that your students are receiving.**

If you are introducing a lesson on box-end wrenches to your students, you should be observing their nonverbal communication. If the students are acting bored (e.g., doodling, falling asleep, fiddling with their notebooks, chatting with their neighbors), communication is probably not occurring.

Why might your students be bored? A gifted student could be bored because he/she already knows more about box-end wrenches than you do. A young woman in this particular class might be bored because she doesn't have the faintest idea why she needs to know about box-end wrenches.

A student with limited English proficiency may be too embarrassed to admit that he/she doesn't even know what the word *wrench* means. An economically disadvantaged student who has never once seen a well-stocked tool box might think that yesterday's lesson on open-end wrenches covered everything there was to know.

Having actively observed that your students are bored, you would need to remedy this problem. You would need to make sure everyone knows what the word *wrench* means, what use wrenches have in the occupational area, and what the difference is between an open-end and a box-end wrench.

Likewise, you should **actively observe students for signs that they understand what they are receiving.** You may have spent hours the night before agonizing over the introduction to your lesson on the box-end wrench. Finally, at 2:00 a.m., you had *the* brainstorm of the century and concocted the perfect introduction.

Today, unfortunately, your students do not have the good grace to appreciate the high quality of your careful lesson planning. They insist on sitting there giving off signals that say "I don't get it." They are scratching their heads, frowning, looking puzzled, and asking thousands of questions.

So, take a hint. Your students are communicating to you—by verbal and nonverbal means—that they do not understand. Back off and start over. Perhaps you have omitted an essential point. Perhaps you have made an incorrect assumption about what they already know. You may be able to salvage the situation by simply filling in that one little gap you didn't expect to find.

So far, we have talked about being active in sending. How can you be active in receiving? The answer is simple—you can **actively look for signs in the message other than words.** Let's say that you stop after class to have a short chat with a Chicano student, Juan. While you are listening to what Juan says, you also pay attention to how well he speaks English.

He seems to understand what you are saying. He nods his head in agreement, answers questions immediately, and uses his new technical vocabulary appropriately. However, you notice that he speaks rather slowly. None of the other signs you observe indicate boredom or incomprehension or low intelligence, so you wonder if he can understand English better than he can speak it.

Consequently you make a mental note to check the cumulative records, guidance office, other teachers, and so on, to see if you can find out more about Juan's English proficiency. By communicating actively, you have received a message that you wouldn't otherwise have "heard."

Also, just hearing often isn't enough to receive the message. You need to make sure to **listen actively** or you may miss an essential point. For example, if Juan is telling you that the electricity in his house has been turned off, you should hear a little alarm bell go off. How can he read homework assignments if there is no light?

By listening actively, you now know that there was a good reason why he didn't do the reading assignment. You don't need to wonder whether he is working conscientiously or not. You may need to spend some time figuring out how to give assignments to Juan that don't require reading at home, but at least you haven't made a false assumption about the student's interest. You have done your part to ensure that the message has arrived intact and understood.

Active listening techniques are techniques commonly used by guidance and counseling personnel to create an atmosphere of warmth and empathy in a conference situation. Simply stated, *active listening* means listening to someone carefully—giving them all your attention with all your senses.

While listening with your ears, you also show the person that you are listening. For example, when the person stops at the end of a sentence or thought, you could indicate that your attention is all on them by verbally responding in some appropriate way. You could say, "Yes, I see" or "Go on" or "Really?"—any short comment that fits the conversation.

At the same time, you can make sure that your nonverbal communication shows that you are receiving. For instance, you can do this by facing toward the person, maintaining eye contact, and maintaining a natural, relaxed posture. All of these actions serve as signals to the person who is speaking that your attention is focused on him/her and that you are receptive to what is being said.

Be Honest

We can talk about being honest by considering sarcasm again. When you use sarcasm, the words you use are not meant to be taken literally. Generally, your real meaning is the opposite of what the words say. You indicate this by putting extra emphasis on part of your message and using facial expressions that reflect your actual meaning. You wrinkle your nose and say "I **love** Limburger cheese" when you really mean "I hate Limburger cheese." We have already discussed how this can sometimes be misunderstood by someone who speaks English fluently.

This kind of message is even more easily misunderstood by someone who does not happen to be fluent in English or who has some other communication difficulty. Many students with exceptional needs may fall into this category, for example:

- A mentally retarded student
- A student with limited standard English proficiency (e.g., a Hispanic, a Cambodian, or any student who speaks and understands a regional or ethnic dialect)
- A deaf student who is reading your lips but cannot hear your emphasis
- A blind student who can hear the emphasis but can't see the smile you softened it with

Unless you consider the special needs of these students, the message stands a good chance of getting lost on the way from the sender to the receiver.

In general, it is always good to follow the rule: Say what you mean, and mean what you say. We have just talked about how it is possible for a message to contain two contradictory thoughts, as in sarcasm. It is equally possible that you are sending contradictory messages at different times.

For example, you may tell a student in a wheelchair that you are confident that he/she can perform in class every bit as well as any student. Yet if, over time, you do not provide this student with the same opportunities for practice at the tasks and machines in your classroom as the other students, you are telling him/her that you are not really confident in his/her ability to perform.

It is always necessary to consider the whole approach you take with a student. You should ask yourself if you, in fact, treat the student as your words promise. You might, for example, tell mentally retarded students that you will allow them all the time they need to acquire and practice the skills you teach in your class. This, in itself, is excellent. You are emphasizing the potential of these students and allowing them to develop this potential to its fullest.

But you must then be sure that you do provide the time necessary for practice. If you do not deliver on your promise, students naturally begin to doubt your honesty. Once again, honest communication serves to maintain credibility. It is one more means to ensure the safe arrival of the message. It prevents the problem of having the communication stopped in transit because the receiver is suspicious of the sender.

We have seen the need for honesty in communication to ensure that the message gets through. However, it is sometimes necessary to be "dishonest" to get the same result. You do have the right to your own personal opinion. As an American citizen, you are guaranteed this right by the Constitution. You may honestly feel, for example, that a male or female student has no business being in a program nontraditional for their sex. You may not want to see young women in auto mechanics or young men in the high-skills steno program.

However, you do have the responsibility and the legal obligation—regardless of your personal opinions and feelings—to act in a nondiscriminatory fashion toward all of your students and specifically toward students with exceptional needs. Thus, an instructor must provide the young women in his/her auto mechanics class with the same opportunities as the young men. All your students, whether they have special needs or not, are entitled to fair treatment from you.

You could look at this sort of situation as a trade-off. You have the right to your own opinion, just as your students have the right to be in the program of their choice. In an ideal world, none of us would have any prejudices toward our fellow human beings. But even if our world is not ideal, we still have the responsibility to treat these fellow humans fairly. Of course, when we treat people fairly, we also help accomplish our purpose of keeping the lines of communication open.

Be Fair

Use nondiscriminatory language. In many ways, being fair is like being honest. For example, you need to use nondiscriminatory language—language that does not label someone as different and less worthy. You can hardly expect black students to be willing to communicate with you if they hear you refer to them as "niggers," either to their faces or behind their backs.

If a Chicano student has trouble understanding a reading assignment, you won't help the situation by saying, "That's okay, I've never had one of you people who could." You are likely to produce the same defensive reaction in the young women in your class if you tell the boys to give them a hand because "girls can't do heavy lifting like that."

You also need to pay attention to the generic terms you use in your classroom or laboratory. Generic terms are terms that refer to a whole class or group of things. We are specifically concerned here with the generic terms you use to refer to your students or people in general.

In English, many so-called generic terms are masculine words. We use the term *mankind* to refer to all humans and the word *policemen* to refer to all police officers. Also, we use masculine pronouns to refer to groups of mixed gender (e.g. "Everyone should bring *his* book tomorrow"). The term *everyone* may include both men and women, but we still use the masculine pronoun *his* to refer to them.

You should avoid using these male-oriented generic terms all of the time. Instead of saying *mankind*, use *humanity* or *people*. Say *police officer* or *firefighter* rather than *policeman* or *fireman*. Alternate the use of *his* with the use of *her* or use *his and her*. If you don't care for either of these suggestions, use the plural *their*. By using these neutral terms instead of male-oriented generics, you will be more fair to the women in your classes.

It may help you to sympathize with students' points of view if you picture your own reaction to discriminatory language. Let's assume that you are a white, middle-class male. How would you feel if your black students said, "You honkies are all alike"? Or if your Chicano students called you an Anglo Imperialist? Or if you overheard a young woman in your class saying, "Well, sure, he dresses like a slob. Don't all men?" Put yourself in the other person's shoes. You must be fair in order to get the message through.

Ensure that your communication does not humiliate or demean any student. You should also be sure that your communication—both verbal and nonverbal—does not embarrass or belittle any student. Don't, for example, pat black students on the head or be overly friendly to show how unprejudiced you are. You might see this as a friendly gesture, but the student will probably think you are being patronizing—you never pat white students on the head.

Likewise, you shouldn't talk baby talk to students with limited English proficiency. While you should simplify your language, you don't want to give the impression that you think they're stupid. Similarly, if you always remain seated at your desk when a student approaches to ask a question, don't get up for the retired woman who has come back to school for retraining.

Students with exceptional needs generally want to be treated just like any other student. If you insist on treating them differently, you may embarrass them. If you embarrass them, they may stop asking questions they need to have answered. Whether you are sending or receiving messages, you need to avoid causing any feelings in your students that will prevent the messages from getting through.

Be sensitive to cultural differences in nonverbal communication. So far, in talking about fairness, we have been referring to the verbal and nonverbal communication of white, middle-class, American culture. We also need to consider those types of communication reflecting other backgrounds. There are often great differences in communication—especially nonverbal communication—from culture to culture.

For instance, in American, white, middle-class culture, it is considered polite to look someone directly in the eye when talking to him/her. In America's black culture, however, it may be considered a sign of obstinacy and defiance to do so. Consequently, your black students may avert their eyes when they talk to you in order to be polite and respectful. This same interpretation of eye contact applies to Hispanic and Asian cultures.

Teachers often tell students to "speak up." However, in many American Indian and Asian cultures, it is considered rude for a child to speak to an adult in a loud voice. So, Indian and Asian children speak in a soft voice when they are trying to show their respect for their elders.

In American, white, middle-class culture, people usually stand two to four feet apart when talking to each other. In Arabic cultures, however, two people speaking to each other usually stand so close together that they can feel each other's breath. In fact, if you don't stand close enough that they can feel your breath, Arabs are likely to think that you are ashamed or have something to hide.

In Peru, as in America, you might indicate how tall someone is by holding your hand at the appropriate distance from the ground and saying, "They're about this tall." In America, the hand is held with the palm down. In Peru, however, the hand is held with the palm down only when talking about animals. When referring to humans, the hand is always held with the palm facing forward, perpendicular to the ground.

In this country, the gesture of slitting the throat, acted out with one hand and accompanying scary sounds, usually indicates an end or termination to something. In some South Pacific islands, however, the same gesture, without accompanying sounds, means "I love you."

From these examples, we see that there is considerable variety in the meanings that can be attached to one gesture, as well as in the gestures used to express a particular meaning. These and other differences in nonverbal communication must be taken into account in order to be fair to students with exceptional needs.

For example, if black students avert their eyes when speaking to you, you should be aware that this is a sign of respect for you as a teacher. Otherwise, you might interpret this lack of eye contact as indicating shiftiness or slyness. If you use this latter interpretation, their message has not gotten through.

Likewise, if you are talking to a group of Hispanic parents at an open house, you need to know that Hispanic people generally stand quite close when talking. If you interpret their actions by American middle-class standards, you might consider them pushy and aggressive, which they are not.

While you do not need to become a social anthropologist specializing in cross-cultural communication, you should always keep in mind that different cultures use different ways to communicate the same idea. You will surely not want to take the risk of interrupting communication because someone accidentally takes offense. Before you react emotionally to nonverbal messages students send you, you need to be sure you understand the message correctly.

Be sensitive to other nonverbal communication differences. The need to interpret nonverbal communications differently is not limited to cultural differences. Students with other exceptional needs may communicate nonverbal messages that vary from the "norm." A student in a wheelchair, for example, may not always maintain an alert, upright posture. However, you should not assume from this that the student is not paying attention. The student's physical condition may not allow "correct" posture.

A gifted student may send you streams of nonverbal messages indicating boredom. In interpreting these messages, you should keep in mind that the fact that this student is bored may be a reflection of the student's greater capacity. The student is not necessarily communicating that your presentation is poor; it simply may not be enough to keep him/her busy. You can act on this message by giving the student more challenging material that will keep him/her interested and involved.

An adult enrolled in a retraining program may seem very distant and formal compared to the younger students in your classes. However, this does not necessarily indicate a dislike for you or your class. Rather, it might reflect a difference in outlook across generations. Someone from an older generation is probably accustomed to more formalized teacher-student relations than are currently prevalent. The adult may merely be trying to live up to standards that were instilled at a young age.

Be sensitive to differences in verbal communication. You can also help assure that messages get through by developing the same kind of understanding of your students' verbal communication. If a student used a slang term you did not understand, you would probably not hesitate to ask what the term meant. If a student from a different cultural background uses words or expressions you do not know, you should find out what they mean, too. You need to understand your students correctly if their messages to you are going to arrive intact.

Further, your students will be more likely to want to communicate with you if you show that, within reasonable limits, you accept their own communication styles. Here again, you might consider your feelings if the situation were to be reversed. If students sneered at the language you use almost instinctively to communicate, how would you feel? It is only fair to do for them what you would want them to do for you.

Become familiar with various dialects. You may also need to develop an understanding of various dialects of English in communicating with students with exceptional needs. Minority students, students with limited English proficiency, or students from another geographic area may speak a different dialect than you do. Each of the various dialects of English has its own characteristic rules for pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Such variations become apparent, for example, when you watch a British movie. Invariably, there are certain words or expressions that you do not know or cannot understand. However, while you may be able to accept this limitation while watching a movie, you cannot do so in your classroom or laboratory. The course content messages you need to transmit to your students are too important to risk this sort of difficulty.

What are some of the dialects of English that you may encounter with your students? There are several. You are probably familiar with the regional dialects of American English—the Southern drawl, the New England twang, the Brooklyn accent. Each of these dialects has its characteristic features.

Furthermore, English is divided into dialects according to social class levels as well as regional areas. Consider the difference between the Brooklyn accent of Archie Bunker and the sophisticated, high-toned New York speech of Tony Randall. Or consider the difference between the speech of an upper-class Southerner and that of a rural Appalachian white.

In addition, there are several foreign languages spoken within the United States. We can call to mind the Spanish of the Hispanic population, the various Indian languages of the Native Americans, the French of the Cajuns in Louisiana and certain parts of Maine, the Pennsylvania Dutch (a form of German) found in various areas of that state, the Gullah dialects of southern coastal areas, the Portuguese spoken in some port cities of New England, and the native languages of Asian-Americans.

These foreign languages cannot be considered dialects of English, of course. They are similar to dialects, however, in that speakers of these languages who learn English as a second language may tend to transfer the characteristic patterns of their original language onto the grammar and pronunciation of English.

One example of a dialect of English that you may need to understand is Black English. Much of the grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary of Black English is similar or identical to that of standard English. Because of this close similarity, some people incorrectly assume that speakers of Black English—who are, of course, mostly black—are just too lazy or stupid to speak "correctly."

At one time, professional linguists, who should have known better, explained the difference between Black English and standard English in terms of anatomy. They claimed that, because of their thick lips and tongue, blacks could not speak correctly—were simply unable to pronounce all of the sounds of the "pure" dialect of standard English. Furthermore, the argument went, due to their relatively simple mental processes, blacks did not have the intellectual capability to deal with the complex grammatical features of the standard dialect.

This thought was carried even further by the Cognitive Deficit Theory of the late 1950s. This theory explained the difference between Black English and standard dialects of English by saying that, due to the lack of sufficient stimulus and exposure to language in a disadvantaged environment, blacks never developed the intellectual ability necessary to use the language at the same "sophisticated" level as speakers of the standard dialect.

It doesn't take much more than common sense to see through these kinds of arguments. If you have seen Sidney Poitier in the movie *To Sir, with Love*, you cannot have failed to notice his perfect pronunciation of the King's English. Black politicians and public officials, from Ralph Bunche to Julian Bond and Donald McHenry, could be quoted endlessly to disprove the notion of insufficient intellectual ability.

Another argument disproving this theory is the fact that some black people speak Black English all the time, some black people speak it some of the time, and some black people never speak it. It is quite common for speakers of Black English to use this dialect in the home or with black friends, yet to switch instantly to standard English when the situation calls for it. Two black professionals on their way to a conference may well speak Black English with each other in the hallway and still speak impeccable standard English when addressing the conference.

This phenomenon, called *dialect switching*, is something that most people do, regardless of which dialect of English they speak. Many people use one set of language patterns in talking to friends (e.g., telling a joke to buddies) and another when speaking in a formal situation (e.g., testifying before a Congressional subcommittee).

It is true, however, that many speakers of Black English don't talk like Sidney Poitier or Ralph Bunche. They don't need to. In most situations, Black English meets their communication needs just as, in most situations, your own particular dialect of English meets yours. Here again, it should be emphasized that this dialect of English has its own rules for grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

For example, in the **grammar** of the dialect we call standard English, the sentence "He is working" could be produced. However, this sentence, in Black English, would be "He working." What happened to the word *is*? Is it omitted in Black English because the speakers don't know any better? Or because they are too lazy to put it in?

Not at all. One of the grammatical rules of Black English is the omission of the verb *to be* in most places where it occurs in the standard dialect. Before you jump any guns and come to any premature conclusions about this dialect, remind yourself that this omission of the verb *to be* also occurs in Russian. Surely, no one would think of calling Tolstoy lazy or stupid because he left the verb *to be* out of his sentences in *War and Peace*.

An example of **pronunciation** variations would be the loss of the *r* sound at the end of words, as in *poor*. In Black English, this word is pronounced as *po*, with no final *r* sound. Again, before you reach any conclusions, remind yourself that many dialects of English show this loss of *r* at the end of a word. President Kennedy's Boston dialect is probably the most obvious example. Of course, in President Kennedy's case, no one drew any negative conclusions about his general intelligence because of his accent.

Last, we can look at **vocabulary.** Black English shares a lot of vocabulary with standard English. It has vocabulary all its own that the standard dialect does not share. And some of the vocabulary of the standard dialect has been borrowed from Black English, especially in certain areas such as music and the counterculture of the 1960s. Terms that are standard in the language today, such as *jazz*, *soul*, *cat*, and *hip*, originated in Black English. They have spread from Black English to enrich the rest of the language.

Obviously, there is more to Black English than the few points that have been brought up here. You may need to develop a greater understanding of this dialect of English than can be given in these pages. Where can you find out what you need to know?

Tap available sources of information. First of all, remember your professional colleagues. Staying with our example of Black English, you could get further information by talking to the English or English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers on the staff. You could consult the foreign language teachers. Even if they are not familiar with Black English per se, they may be able to give you very helpful hints on how to go about acquiring a better knowledge of it.

Or you might have a black colleague in your school who has taken a personal interest in Black English or who can simply answer questions for you on what particular words, phrases, or structures mean. Likewise, you might ask your students the meaning of something you don't understand.

In addition, your school will probably provide opportunities for professional development. If there is a large need for teachers to understand Black English, for example, you could suggest that inservice workshops or seminars on Black English be offered. Local colleges may have specialists on Black English in their English or linguistics departments. You could consult such outside specialists.

Most of all, you could increase your knowledge of Black English by simply using your newly developed ability to communicate actively. You can listen closely to what your students are saying. You can pay attention to the context of individual messages and use this context to help you determine meaning.

For example, a black student in auto mechanics might say, "I'm bringing my ride in tomorrow to work on the brakes." From this, the instructor could logically assume that, since students often work on their own cars in the shop, and this student's ride needs work on the brakes, *ride* means "car."

Then, you can test yourself for understanding—make sure you understand the message you are receiving as it was intended by the sender. Ask the student if *ride* means "car." If you feel uncomfortable doing this, make a mental note to ask one of your colleagues later. The important thing is to find out for sure. With these hints in mind, you should be able to ensure that communication will occur in your classroom or laboratory.

Be sensitive in helping students improve their English skills. As you have seen in these remarks about Black English, we can encounter communication problems if we try to apply the standards of our own native dialect or language while speaking to someone who speaks a different dialect or language. We compound these problems if we then judge the person to be mentally deficient if he or she does not measure up to our standards. You might encounter such problems with any students with exceptional needs.

For example, a Hispanic student with limited English proficiency might have difficulty using the possessive adjectives *his* and *her* properly. In English, we use *his* when the owner is a male and *her* when the owner is a female: *his* book, *her* book. However, in Spanish, this distinction is not maintained. In Spanish, you cannot tell the sex of the owner by the word used as the possessive adjective. Consequently, if Hispanic students fail to make this distinction properly in English, it is not because they don't know the difference between males and females. Rather, it is probably because no one has ever bothered to teach them this distinction in English.

Likewise, hearing-impaired students who use American Sign Language (ASL) often fail to add the final *s* on third-person singular, present-tense verb forms (e.g., he takes) when speaking. This is, again, not because these students can't tell the difference between the words *I, you,* and *he*. Rather, since ASL does not show this difference in verb forms, these students may simply not remember to make the distinction in written or spoken English.

You will need to correct these grammatical mistakes made by students with exceptional needs—or any of your students. Remember, however, that too much correction may well intimidate students. If they are never allowed to finish a sentence without interruption, they may just quit trying. You should use your judgment in deciding when to correct. And, when you do correct, you should never assume that grammatical mistakes imply a lack of intelligence or attention.

You need to help students with exceptional needs to improve their language skills, since their future employers may not display the same tolerance you are learning to show.[1] In the meantime, however, you keep the channels of communication open so that messages can get through.

These same principles apply to vocabulary. Remember that each of us has the opportunity to learn only those elements of the language to which we are exposed. So it follows logically that some economically disadvantaged students may not have a sophisticated vocabulary. A displaced homemaker may not have had the opportunity to acquire or maintain the kind of vocabulary necessary for your program.

Older persons in retraining programs may have a vocabulary that strikes you as quaint and old-fashioned. This doesn't mean that their mental processes are necessarily rusty and full of cobwebs. It simply reflects the fact that they learned to speak the language a long time ago when different words and expressions were common. In fact, wouldn't it strike you as a little strange if an elderly, white-haired woman started talking like a teenager?

In all these cases, we end up coming right back to the need to be fair—to avoid making any assumptions about someone's intelligence or motivation based on their language ability. You should never think that the way you express something is the only way it can be said. After all, if you just listen, you will hear people express themselves in other ways all the time. You need to avoid emotional reactions that can close off the lines of communication.

Be Understandable

The conscientious efforts that you put into being active, honest, and fair should serve to keep the lines of communication open so that messages (e.g., concerning your technical content) can be sent. However, it does little good to keep the lines open if the messages you send cannot be understood.

It is, of course, the receivers of the messages—your students—who need to understand them. You need to be able to tailor your messages to fit the receivers. Once a message has been tailored and sent, you can then check for proper fit. You will know you have the proper fit when your students can demonstrate their understanding of your messages. How do you go about all this?

Examine your messages. You need to check your messages to see if they have the potential to be understood. For example, when you send out messages (give information, ask questions), do you send them one after another at lightning **speed** with hardly a pause for breath? If this is the case, you will probably have to learn to slow things down for those students who need more time in order to understand. You may need to develop the habit of pausing for breath and sending out only one message at a time.

Also, you need to take a look at the kinds of words you use. Is your **vocabulary** appropriate for the beginning vocational-technical student? Is it appropriate for students with exceptional needs? When you are trying to communicate your subject matter to a disadvantaged student from the inner city or to a displaced homemaker, you must speak in terms they can understand.

A large and extensive vocabulary is a valuable tool. But it is useless as a tool unless both sender and receiver are familiar with it. Thus, you need to use vocabulary that all your students—including those with exceptional needs—can understand.

And your **sentences**—are they generally of paragraph length? How many different thoughts or ideas do they usually contain? Some students with exceptional needs are likely to be weak in communication skills in the first place. You need to give them new thoughts and ideas one at a time. When you load too much into a single message, your receivers might just throw their hands up in despair at the sheer volume of it all.

Last, you need to examine how consistent you are in presenting **new thoughts or skills** to your students. You have, no doubt, experienced the frustration of trying to understand people who keep changing subjects as they speak. Remember this frustration when you send out messages in the classroom.

It is important not to present more than one way to perform the new skill you are teaching to your class. It will leave the unskilled receivers perplexed. If you find wisdom in proverbs, remind yourself of this one: Slow and steady wins the race.

Make use of other people—volunteers, classroom aides, paraprofessionals—who could be helpful in fitting your messages to the language skills of students with exceptional needs. A professional or volunteer interpreter, for example, could translate for students with limited English proficiency or for hearing-impaired students. Any volunteer who reads well aloud could serve as a reader for visually impaired students or any other students with low reading skills.

The availability of such personnel varies from situation to situation. Your administration can tell you whether such personnel are available to you.

1. To gain skill in helping students improve their oral communication skills, you may wish to refer to Module M-4, *Assist Students in Improving Their Oral Communication Skills*.

Tailor your messages to fit your receivers' frames of reference. A frame of reference is the knowledge or set of attitudes that a person brings to a new experience. A student's frame of reference includes all past experience with people, things, and events. It forms a structure into which a student fits new information and experiences as they are taken in.

Let's say that an auto mechanics instructor is introducing her class to gears. She first tells them what a gear is, using a dictionary definition: "A gear is a toothed wheel." But, by observing actively, she notices that several students are frowning. They apparently do not understand.

What can she do? She might try giving students some examples of gears within their own frames of reference. What gears might her students already be familiar with? The displaced homemaker would probably know of the gears in her kitchen can opener or sewing machine. Students with bicycles would have observed the gears that drive the chain. Students who do not have bicycles may have seen the gears inside a clock or the gears that drive the treads on a tank or bulldozer.

If she could not think of common, everyday examples of gears, she could have rephrased her definition in terms the students could understand. After all, a toothed wheel could be a wheel with teeth on it—literally.

She could have told them: "A gear is like a wheel. But a wheel is flat and smooth on the edge, so that it can roll easily. A gear does not have a flat, smooth edge. The edge of a gear goes in and out. So, the edge of a gear is all points, like the point of a pencil. We call these points teeth. . ."

You may find it difficult, at times, to tailor your messages to your students' frames of reference in this fashion. But you will have your reward when you see your messages getting through.

Use other students to help you tailor messages. You may find that you have spent more time than you planned trying to define what a particular word means. Assume that a brave student raises a hand and volunteers to help. After one short sentence of language you may only partially understand, this student may have the entire class nodding their heads in agreement and understanding.

You may find this technique particularly useful in dealing with students with limited English proficiency. You may be able to use a bilingual student to explain points or give instruction to other students whose understanding of English is limited.

Using students to instruct other students is of great benefit to both parties. For the student giving instruction, teaching itself is a learning process. Communicating his/her knowledge to someone else helps to reinforce that knowledge for him/her. While you should not delegate the whole responsibility of teaching to your students, you can often use them very productively to assist you on specific points.

Develop alternate, functional means to get your message across to students with communication deficits, if needed. You cannot, for example, give reading assignments to a blind student in their usual form. It may be possible to have these assignments transcribed into braille.

Or, you or a student can make audiotapes of the reading for the blind student to listen to. These same audiotapes can also be used by any sighted student who has difficulty with reading. Or, you might have a sighted student read the assignment aloud to a blind student or at least give an oral summary.

If you have a hearing-impaired student who does not lip-read well and cannot hear lessons you present orally, you may be able to locate written materials that present the same information. The student can use these. You could have a deaf interpreter translate into sign language, if possible. You could also find a student who takes good notes and have these notes passed on to the deaf student.

In general, writing down what you have said and saying aloud what you have written will help many of your students with exceptional needs to receive your messages. In other words, don't rely on a single communication mode when developing your lesson plans. Use a **variety of techniques.**

An excellent strategy for use with hearing-impaired students might be for you to learn some basic signs of **American Sign Language** (ASL). You need not become an expert signer. It would be quite feasible,

however, for you to pick up some basic words and perhaps the letters of the alphabet from hearing-impaired students in your classes. Doing so could greatly ease any communication problems with these students. It may also be possible for you to take a short course in ASL as part of your professional development activities.

You might also develop a **repertoire of gestures or actions** with agreed-upon meanings for use in the classroom or laboratory. This would benefit not only your hearing-impaired students, but all students in any situation where a high noise level makes oral communication difficult or impossible. You could, for instance, flick the ceiling lights on and off to signal "Stop work!" Your repertoire could include the following sort of items:

Gesture	Agreed Meaning
• Slitting throat	• Stop your machine
• Tapping student on shoulder	• Be careful
• Moving hand in circles	• Faster
• Waving raised hand	• I need assistance
• Holding up one finger	• I need a restroom break
• Pointing to goggles, etc.	• Put on goggles, etc.
• Indicating "thumbs up"	• Good work
• Rubbing hands together	• Begin work

If you use gestures such as these, you should keep in mind that (1) the meaning you agree to attach to a gesture must be specific and (2) the number of gestures in your repertoire should be kept fairly small, no more than a dozen.

In addition, **signs** that show a picture or a symbol can also be used as a functional means of communication. You may already use signs as safety reminders in your laboratory. A red circle attached to a particular door could mean that the door should always be shut. A picture of a cigarette with a line drawn through it could serve as a no-smoking reminder. A picture of goggles and hard hat at the entrance to a room might mean that these must be worn inside.

The use of verbal messages supplemented by these visual reminders allows you to get important messages across to all your vocational students by avoiding those areas in which many exceptional students are lacking in skills. Your messages are tailored to the students' fit.

There are **other functional measures** that you can take in your classroom or laboratory to ensure that communication occurs with students with exceptional needs. Partially sighted students should be seated in the front row, toward the middle of the room, to minimize glare from the windows or to prevent lights from shining in their eyes. Using yellow chalk instead of white to write on the board will serve the same purpose. Likewise, seating hearing-impaired students in the same location will be of great assistance to them. The deaf student who lip-reads should be as close to you as possible.

Consider your personal mannerisms in speaking. Do you put your hand in front of your mouth while you are talking? Do you face away from the person to whom you are talking? Either of these two mannerisms will make it very difficult for students to read your lips.

Keep in mind also that students with hearing or visual impairments will be unable to receive many of your nonverbal messages. The blind student cannot see you nod to indicate approval. A deaf student, even when reading lips, cannot hear the extra emphasis you put on a part of a message to indicate its particular importance.

You will want to take these limitations into account so that you can ensure that your messages arrive safe and sound. One way in which you can do so is by developing the habit of stating all of your messages orally. Don't just nod to indicate approval—say it in words. Indicate the particular importance of one message or another by saying that it is important.

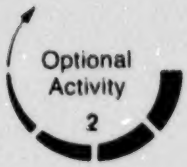
This doesn't mean that you cannot or should not send nonverbal messages to your students. Of course, you should continue to do so. But, you need to remember those students who have difficulty receiving nonverbal messages and send that same message verbally so that everyone will understand. You will find that doing so will benefit not only your exceptional students but all students.

Constantly check messages for a proper fit. Has your tailoring been successful? If it has been, your students will be able to demonstrate their understanding to you. For instance, if a hearing-impaired student stops work when you flick the lights, he/she has understood the message.

You can test for understanding by having the students carry out directions, repeat or paraphrase your explanation, or answer key questions. The disadvantaged youth who can tell the instructor that the pointed wheel inside the tank treads is a gear understands what a gear is. The visually impaired student who can answer questions on the content of a reading assignment has understood that assignment.

The student with limited English proficiency who confers with a bilingual classmate and then demonstrates a manipulative skill has an understanding of that skill. The young woman in an auto mechanics class demonstrates understanding of her new automotive vocabulary when she uses it appropriately.

If you develop the habit of testing for understanding—formally or informally—you will be able to spot the messages that don't get across immediately. Then, you will be able to take action right away before the situation becomes further confused.



For further information on the techniques of active listening—called *accurate empathy* in this reference—you may wish to read the following supplementary reference: Truax and Carkhuff, *Toward Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy: Training and Practice*, pp. 285–293.

For further information on nonverbal communication and cultural differences in nonverbal communication, you may wish to read relevant sections of the following supplementary reference: Hall, *The Silent Language*.

If you are an inservice teacher, you may wish to learn more about your students' communication needs by having them complete an informal data sheet asking such questions as the following:

- Do you usually understand what is being said in class? If not, what would make it easier for you to understand?
- Do you usually understand the written materials we use in class or for outside assignments?
- Do you usually understand the audiovisual materials used in class (e.g., films, slides, tapes, charts, diagrams)?
- Does the physical environment of the classroom or lab affect how well you learn? (Think about noise, lighting, where you sit or work in the room, how far you are from the teacher, and so on.)
- Do I as a teacher have any habits or mannerisms that make it hard for you to understand me? (For example, talking too fast or too softly, not facing you when I talk, using words you don't understand, and so on.)

You might then use this information to plan strategies for improving your communication skills to meet your students' needs.

You may wish to interview one or more experienced teachers—or other professionals who work with students with exceptional needs—about their problems and successes in communicating effectively with these students. You might structure your discussions around key questions such as the following:

- What communication problems have you encountered in working with students with exceptional needs?
- How did you know there was a problem?
- What strategies did you use to improve your communication to meet the students' needs?

Read the following case script describing how Mr. Jones, a vocational teacher, communicated with students with exceptional needs. As you read, try to determine what Mr. Jones is doing right and what he is doing wrong. At the end of the case script are some questions. Use these questions to guide your [illegible] **preparing a written critique** of Mr. Jones's performance in communicating with his students.

CASE SCRIPT

One morning, on his way to his first class, Mr. Jones stops to greet some students in the hallway. They crowd around him.

Students:

Hi, Mr. Jones . . . how are you? . . . how's it going? . . . what's new?

Mr. Jones:

Good morning, everyone, I'm just fine. How are all of you?

Students:

Hey, just great . . . real good . . . not bad . . . hanging in there.

Students begin to drift away. Jesús Gonzalez, a student with limited English proficiency, lingers.

Mr. Jones:

Jesús, how are you today?

Jesús moves one step closer to Mr. Jones.

Jesús:

Fine, thanks. Say, Mr. Jones, about that reading assignment from last night on job interviews. . .

Mr. Jones moves one step away.

Mr. Jones:

Did you have any problems with it?

Jesús again moves one step closer.

Jesús:

Yes, I really didn't understand it too well. It was hard to read.

Mr. Jones starts to move away again but stops himself.

Mr. Jones:

Why don't you stop in the lab during your free period? I have an audiotape of that reading. You can listen to the tape and read along. Okay?

Jesús:

Sure. Thanks, Mr. Jones. See you later.

Mr. Jones:

Got a minute before you go, Jesús?

Jesús:

Sure, Mr. Jones. What do you need?

Mr. Jones:

Tell me something. Did you notice how I backed away when you first came up to talk to me?

Jesús:

Well, yes. . .

Mr. Jones:

Okay. That's because people in this country don't usually stand that close together when they're talking. Now, I know that people in Latin cultures do stand closer together when they're talking, don't they?

Jesús:

Yeah, they do. Gee, I'm sorry, Mr. Jones. I didn't mean to do it wrong.

Mr. Jones:

No need to apologize at all, Jesús. It's not wrong. I just wanted you to know about it so you won't get into any problems in your job interviews. The thing is, there's no "right" way to do it. It's just that most people are used to a particular way, and they get uncomfortable when someone does it differently. And you'll want to know about that so that you don't make them feel uncomfortable. Otherwise, you could have a hard time in your job interviews. See what I mean?

Jesús:

Yeah, I think so. It's just a question of what people are used to. Right?

Mr. Jones:

Right.

Jesús:

Okay. Well, hey, thanks a lot, Mr. Jones. I'll be in later to use that audiotape. So long.

Mr. Jones:

So long, Jesús.

The scene shifts to Mr. Jones's vocational classroom. The room is full of students. It's a lovely warm day so Mr. Jones has the window open. The room is full of spring sounds, including the throbbing of a lawn mower. Mr. Jones is walking around explaining the work to be done today. Present, among others, are Kim Deveaux, a mentally retarded student; Barbara Johnson, a black student; and Susan Roth, who is hearing-impaired.

Susan is having a very difficult time keeping up in today's class. Consequently, she is getting more and more frustrated. She is about ready to tune out on Mr. Jones's class.

Mr. Jones:

So, I want to be sure that you all understand what constitutes appropriate dress and conduct for the job interview. We're going to role-play some interview situations in a few minutes. In role-playing, one student will take the role of the interviewer, and another, that of the interviewee. They then will act out the interview. This will give you the chance to see what it's going to be like. Then we'll react to it all with a discussion. But first--any questions about appropriate dress or conduct during the interview?

Susan shifts in her seat repeatedly, trying to see Mr. Jones's face. A car honks outside, and she glares at the open window. Kim turns to chat with Steve who sits next to her.

Kim:

What's this business about roll-paying he's talking about?

Steve:

Well, what he said was. . .

Steve proceeds to explain about role-playing to Kim. Mr. Jones notices what is going on and decides to let Steve help Kim. He has enough to keep him busy for the moment.

Mr. Jones:

Thanks, Steve. Give Kim a hand if she doesn't understand, okay?

Susan fiddles with her hearing aid. She drums her fingers on the table. She winces at the sound of squealing brakes coming in the open window.

Steve:

Mr. Jones, I hate to wear a tie. Do I have to, just for an interview?

Mr. Jones:

Well, no, you don't **have** to. But it will look better if you do. It will help give the impression that you are serious about the job you are interviewing for. A lot of employers feel that the way you dress reflects the way you feel about yourself and your work. So, wearing a coat and tie could really help you get the job.

Susan appears increasingly annoyed. She is staring at her desk and has evidently given up trying to lip-read what Mr. Jones is saying.

Alice:

Should I get a new hairdo, Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones:

No, you certainly don't need to do that, as long as your hair looks neat and well groomed. Don't get the wrong idea from all this. I'm not saying that you should look like you just stepped out of a fashion magazine. You should just look nice and neat and well groomed so you can make your best impression.

Susan loses patience completely. She turns off her hearing aid in exasperation and glares at Mr. Jones.

Barbara:

Say, Mr. Jones, should I wear my dashiki, with my hair in cornrows like I have it today?

Mr. Jones hesitates before replying.

Mr. Jones:

I . . . don't see why you shouldn't, Barbara.

Susan takes out paper and pen. She becomes engrossed in writing a letter. Barbara replies to Mr. Jones—in a very challenging tone.

Barbara:

What if some white personnel guy decides I don't look nice and neat and well groomed? What kind of impression will that make?

Mr. Jones looks uncomfortable.

Mr. Jones:

I don't know what kind of impression it will make.

Barbara looks him straight in the eye, and he blushes.

Mr. Jones:

I don't see why you're so concerned about it.

Susan continues writing, oblivious to the class around her.

Barbara:

Are you putting me on, Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones replies weakly.

Mr. Jones:

No, not at all. Look, it's up to you, Barbara. I can't tell you what you should do.

Susan smiles as she remembers a funny story to put in her letter.

How well does Mr. Jones communicate with his students with exceptional needs? What does he do to keep the channels of communication open? What does he do to shut off the channels of communication? What else might he do to help maintain the channels of communication with his students?

Compare your written critique of the teacher's performance with the model critique given below. Your critique need not exactly duplicate the model critique, however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

MODEL CRITIQUE

Mr. Jones seemed to be doing a good job of keeping the lines of communication open with **Jesús González.** He was doing his part by being active, fair, and understandable with Jesús. Because of this, he was able to communicate effectively with Jesús about two different matters.

First, he listened to Jesús's remarks about the reading assignment and took them seriously. Instead of simply assuming that Jesús hadn't done the assignment when he mentioned it, he asked if Jesús had had trouble reading it. He communicated actively in that he found out how well Jesús had understood the reading assignment. He was willing to listen to what Jesús had to say about the assignment.

However, Mr. Jones should have been aware of this problem earlier and planned to have Jesús use the tape from the very beginning. Had he done this, Jesús would not have had to go through the frustration of trying to read the assignment unaided. However, Mr. Jones did at least rectify his mistake in the end.

Second, he tried to be understandable with Jesús. When he found that Jesús was unable to read the assignment—and consequently didn't receive the messages it contained—he arranged for Jesús to receive those messages in a different form. His concern was to get across the messages in the reading. When he discovered that reading wasn't feasible at present, he suggested that Jesús play an audiotape and read along. In other words, he tailored the message to fit Jesús's present skills in communicating.

Third, he did a very good job of being fair in communicating with Jesús. In his discussion of how close people stand when talking, he managed to tell Jesús that he was standing "too close." But he was also careful to point out that this was simply a matter of convention, not of right or wrong. The whole discussion was carried out in neutral terms.

By respecting Jesús's ethnic heritage and cultural difference in this matter, Mr. Jones avoided a possible breakdown in the lines of communication. He also managed, at the same time, to give Jesús a valuable piece of information, so that Jesús could keep **his** lines of communication open during job interviews.

Mr. Jones also did a good job of keeping the channels of communication open with **Kim Deveaux.** That is, what he did was good, as far as it went. By being active, he noticed that another student was helping Kim receive his messages. He then encouraged this student to help Kim further as the need arose. All of this, of course, increased the chances of Kim's actually receiving the messages that Mr. Jones was sending.

Mr. Jones could have been more active in his communication with Kim, however. Knowing that Kim was mentally retarded, he could have anticipated that Kim might have some difficulty in receiving his messages. Had he done this, he would have been able to arrange beforehand for another student to help Kim as necessary.

Contacting a student in advance would have allowed Mr. Jones to give the student a better idea of what to do for Kim—what kind of help she might need and how this help could be given. Also, Mr. Jones would have been able to choose which student he wanted to help Kim, instead of having to rely on the one who happened to be sitting next to her.

Other alternatives would have been for Mr. Jones to modify his content or use additional techniques to ensure that his messages were understood by Kim. For example, he could have written down a simple explanation of role-playing for the students who would need it. Or he could have staged a demonstration of role-playing.

Mr. Jones did make a serious error in trying to communicate with **Barbara Johnson.** He failed to be honest with her. When she asked if her dashiki and cornrow hairstyle were appropriate for an interview, he hedged and beat around the bush. He didn't sound as though he really believed what he was saying and he was clearly uncomfortable.

Not satisfied with his answer, Barbara challenged him openly. But, for some reason, he could not bring himself to tell Barbara what he really thought—that she should dress differently. Communication was not occurring.

Unpleasant though the prospect may sound, Mr. Jones should have simply told Barbara that, in his opinion, she did run the risk of offending the "white personnel guy" if she went for an interview in dashiki and cornrows. It is certainly regrettable that someone could be offended by Barbara's ethnic dress. But it is even more regrettable that Mr. Jones, who was aware of this possibility, failed to communicate this to Barbara.

For the effort he put into trying to spare Barbara's feelings on this point, his reward was that Barbara now suspects his sincerity. That is certainly not the best atmosphere for keeping the channels of communication open. If anything, it is likely to guarantee that they will be kept closed.

Last of all, Mr. Jones was completely unsuccessful in keeping the channels of communication open with **Susan Roth.** Susan was unable to receive Mr. Jones's messages and, in frustration, finally quit trying. She had exactly that kind of emotional reaction to the situation that led her to cut off communication.

Mr. Jones brought this situation on himself by failing to be active in his communication with Susan. She sent out several nonverbal messages saying that she wasn't receiving Mr. Jones's messages. If Mr. Jones had been observing actively, any one of these messages from Susan would have been enough to remind him that he needed to face in her direction so that she could lip-read. He should also have understood that the noise coming in through the open window was very troublesome to Susan with her hearing aid.

The channels of communication with Susan could have been kept open with little difficulty. Mr. Jones could have shut the offending window so that Susan could rely on her hearing aid. He could have tried to remember to face in her direction, allowing her to lip-read. Or, as with Kim, he could have arranged for a peer to help Susan as the need arose. Any of these three strategies would have given Susan the help she needed to keep the channels of communication open.

Level of Performance: Your written critique of the teacher's performance should have covered the same **major** points as the model critique. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Keeping the Lines of Communication Open, pp. 9–20, or check with your resource person if necessary.

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Learning Experience II

OVERVIEW

Given case situations describing two students with exceptional needs, identify possible communication difficulties these students might experience and strategies you could use to overcome these difficulties.

You will be reading the Case Situations, pp. 28–29, and identifying the possible communication difficulties that might be experienced by the students described and strategies you could use to overcome these difficulties.

You will be evaluating your competency in identifying possible communication difficulties and strategies to overcome them by comparing your completed analyses with the Model Analyses, pp. 31–32.

The following case situations describe two students with exceptional needs. Assume that these students are enrolled in your own vocational-technical program. Read each of the case situations, and then **identify in writing** (1) the possible communication difficulties these two students could experience in your classroom or laboratory and (2) strategies you could use to overcome these difficulties and keep the lines of communication open to these two students.

CASE SITUATIONS

Case Situation 1:

Claude LaSalle likes to work with his hands and enjoys doing projects. He has an active, restless nature and finds inactivity unbearable. He has some musical ability and enjoys playing the guitar. However, he cannot read music or written words because he has a learning disability called dyslexia. When he looks at anything in writing, the letters appear to him to be scrambled or reversed. He has been continually frustrated in his attempts to learn to read.

Because of his frustration and embarrassment, Claude avoids any kind of book work, claiming that he doesn't have the time or that he's not interested in that "sissy stuff." In school, he has always pretended to be bored or has acted up if called on to read. When confronted with assignments that require reading or writing, Claude tends to become so anxious and upset that he gives up quickly.

Many of his teachers are convinced that he is lazy. However, both the athletic coach and the wood shop teacher say that he is eager to participate and quick to take responsibility when he is shown how to do things and allowed to work on things that interest him.

Case Situation 2:

Tran Thi Minh is a Vietnamese refugee in the United States. In Vietnam, she took six years of English in school. However, her English courses concentrated on the study of British literature. As a result, Tran Thi Minh's reading and writing skills in English are well developed, but her conversational skills are weak.

Her spoken English is broken, slow, and very heavily accented. In addition, her conversational vocabulary is limited to the terms she learned by reading British literature. She has had no exposure to American accents or slang terms.

Furthermore, Tran Thi Minh has considerable difficulty understanding English when it is spoken to her. She first noticed this when American troops came to her hometown in Vietnam. She never seemed to be able to understand them very well.

She noticed the same thing as soon as she arrived in the United States. She has always assumed, however, that this is simply because of the strange accents of these Americans and the fact that they talk too fast.

NOTES

Compare your written responses to the case situations with the model analyses given below. Your responses need not exactly duplicate the model responses; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

MODEL ANALYSES

Case Situation 1:

Communication difficulties. Claude LaSalle would experience his greatest difficulties with **reading** and **writing** because of his dyslexia. This would be a great disadvantage in any vocational-technical classroom or laboratory.

He would be able to read neither the printed materials you might assign nor the simplest of things—things that you take for granted. He could not read signs concerning safety procedures, machinery instructions, or even notices on the bulletin board announcing meetings of your vocational student organization.

Furthermore, any activities requiring writing would be a serious problem for Claude. Developing a final project report, for example, would not be feasible for him if it had to be prepared in written form. Even jotting down a few notes on what you say in class would be a problem. Claude would have to rely on his memory to retain any material you present.

One more potential problem for Claude would be your reaction to his nonverbal communication—his **negative behavior.** His inability to read and write frustrates and embarrasses him. Because of this, he often become restless, acts bored and uninterested, or simply gives up on tasks. If you react negatively and emotionally to this apparent boredom and lack of interest, the lines of communication will likely be broken.

Strategies. The best strategy to use with Claude would be to communicate understandably. That is, you should present information to him in a manner that he can understand—in a manner that does not require reading or writing.

However, given Claude's embarrassment about reading and writing, you would want to use caution in helping him. It would be best to approach him in some way that would not embarrass him further. You might, for example, provide Claude with the help he needs during a lab session in which you are going around the room speaking to **each** student individually. In this way, it is not apparent to Claude or to other students that Claude is receiving **extra** attention.

You should be careful not to single Claude out when you give him help. It would be best to include him in a group of students who require the same kind of help. Claude has reading problems; there must be other students in the class with the same problem.

You could arrange for small-group sessions in which **all** these students use an audiotape of a reading assignment, while reading along. You could also set up group sessions, using peers or aides to read aloud or to review class notes. In this manner, you could help Claude and other students to receive the messages they cannot get by reading.

You can best deal with Claude's nonverbal behavior by communicating fairly. You should avoid making any assumptions about Claude's motivation or interest based on his behavior. You should keep in mind that Claude's behavior is a result of his frustration over reading and writing. In this way, you should be able to keep the lines of communication open with Claude.

Case Situation 2:

Communication difficulties. Tran Thi Minh would experience problems in the vocational-technical classroom or laboratory with **vocabulary,** the use of **spoken English,** and **nonverbal communication.**

Several kinds of problems could occur with vocabulary. First, she might have difficulty understanding some American words or expressions because of her lack of exposure to them. Second, she could have trouble with normal conversational vocabulary because of the literary tone of her English classes. Third, she would probably lack any technical vocabulary at all. This would greatly affect her ability to understand your subject matter messages.

Furthermore, her own broken and heavily accented English could be difficult for you or her peers in the class to understand. Likewise, it would be difficult for her to understand the English spoken to her. In other words, spoken English—whether spoken to her or by her—would present problems in communication.

Last, difficulties could arise in nonverbal communication with Tran Thi Minh. Her own nonverbal communication would reflect the standards of her native

culture. Yours, and that of most of the other students in the class, would reflect the standards of American culture. Consequently, there would be ample room for misunderstanding when these two different standards of nonverbal communication meet in your classroom or laboratory.

She might, for example, avert her eyes and speak in a lowered voice to indicate respect for you as teacher. If you are not aware that these actions are meant as marks of respect—if you try to apply American standards to them—you might just think she is being sly or doesn't want to face up to what is happening.

Strategies. In order to overcome Tran Thi Minh's problems with both vocabulary and the use of spoken English, you should communicate understandably. That is, you should be careful to use vocabulary that she can understand and to simplify your own spoken English as much as possible.

You might also use a bilingual peer or aide, if available, to translate for her in the classroom or laboratory. Another good idea in this case would be to use written materials as much as possible. Since her reading and writing skills in English are well developed, she may very well be able to understand things in writing that she cannot understand when spoken.

To overcome the problem of differing nonverbal communication, you should communicate fairly. Here, the important thing to remember is that Tran Thi Minh comes from a different culture, which has a different way of doing things. So, before making any assumptions about her intelligence or motivation from such things as tone of voice, posture, gestures, or how close she stands, be sure that you know what these things "mean" to her. In that way, you will know what she is trying to communicate to you by them.

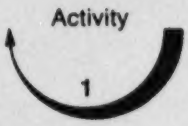
Of course, you would also want to make her aware of the nonverbal communication standards of American culture so that she can properly understand what you and her peers in the class are trying to communicate to her.

Level of Performance: Your completed written responses to the case situations should have covered the same **major** points as the model analyses. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Keeping the Lines of Communication Open, pp. 9–20, or check with your resource person if necessary.

Learning Experience III

FINAL EXPERIENCE

In an **actual teaching situation,*** improve your communication skills.



As part of your duties as a teacher, improve your communication skills. This will include—

- communicating actively
- communicating honestly
- communicating fairly
- communicating understandably

NOTE: Due to the nature of this experience, you will need to have access to an actual teaching situation over an extended period of time (e.g., one to three weeks).

As you perform each of the above activities, document your actions (in writing, on a tape, through a log) for assessment purposes.

Arrange to have your resource person review any documentation you have compiled. If possible, arrange to have your resource person observe at least one instance in which you are actually working with students to improve your communication skills.

Your total competency will be assessed by your resource person, using the Teacher Performance Assessment Form, pp. 35–36.

Based upon the criteria specified in this assessment instrument, your resource person will determine whether you are competent in improving your communication skills.

*For a definition of "actual teaching situation," see the inside back cover.

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NOTES

TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

Improve Your Communication Skills (L-8)

Name _____

Date _____

Resource Person _____

Directions: Indicate the level of the teacher's accomplishment by placing an X in the appropriate box under the LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE heading. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE					
	N/A	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
In communicating actively, the teacher:						
1. observed students' verbal and nonverbal communication for signs of attention and comprehension	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. adjusted his/her own communication to account for lack of attention and comprehension	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. used active listening techniques	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In communicating honestly, the teacher:						
4. avoided the use of sarcasm or other messages containing two contradictory thoughts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. acted in ways consistent with what the teacher said he/she would do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. avoided expressing discriminatory opinions and feelings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In communicating fairly, the teacher:						
7. used nondiscriminatory language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. ensured that his/her communication patterns—verbal and nonverbal—did not single out any student as different	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. identified and interpreted student verbal and nonverbal behavior accurately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. sought assistance, if necessary, to understand students' communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. demonstrated acceptance of varying language styles, within reasonable limits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In communicating understandably, the teacher:						
12. simplified his/her own communication patterns, if necessary, by:						
a. speaking slowly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. using simple language and directions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. using simple sentence structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. using simple vocabulary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. explaining and presenting skills in a consistent manner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	N/A	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
13. tailored his/her own communication to fit students' abilities by:						
a. communicating at a level appropriate to students' existing skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. providing examples geared to students' frames of reference .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. introducing technical terms using common terminology and language students understand	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. using students to explain content to peers in their own terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. using bilingual students, if possible, to instruct students with limited English proficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. communicated with students having communication deficits by developing functional means and measures, including:						
a. presenting information in a variety of audio and visual forms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. using peers and aides as readers, tutors, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. seating students so that they could hear and see most easily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. tested for students' comprehension, by having them:						
a. answer key questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. repeat or paraphrase directions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. carry out instructions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. use technical vocabulary appropriately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Level of Performance: All items must receive N/A, GOOD, or EXCELLENT responses. If any item receives a NONE, POOR, or FAIR response, the teacher and resource person should meet to determine what additional activities the teacher needs to complete in order to reach competency in the weak area(s).

ABOUT USING THE NATIONAL CENTER'S PBTE MODULES

Organization

Each module is designed to help you gain competency in a particular skill area considered important to teaching success. A module is made up of a series of learning experiences, some providing background information, some providing practice experiences, and others combining these two functions. Completing these experiences should **enable** you to achieve the **terminal** objective in the final learning experience. The final experience in each module always requires you to demonstrate the skill in an actual teaching situation when you are an intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or occupational trainer.

Procedures

Modules are designed to allow you to individualize your teacher education program. You need to take only those modules covering skills that you do not already possess. Similarly, you need not complete any learning experience within a module if you already have the skill needed to complete it. Therefore, before taking any module, you should carefully review (1) the introduction, (2) the objectives listed on p. 4, (3) the overviews preceding each learning experience, and (4) the final experience. After comparing your present needs and competencies with the information you have read in these sections, you should be ready to make one of the following decisions:

- That you do not have the competencies indicated and should complete the entire module
- That you are competent in one or more of the enabling objectives leading to the final learning experience and, thus, can omit those learning experiences
- That you are already competent in this area and are ready to complete the final learning experience in order to "test out"
- That the module is inappropriate to your needs at this time

When you are ready to complete the final learning experience **and** have access to an actual teaching situation, make the necessary arrangements with your resource person. If you do not complete the final experience successfully, meet with your resource person and arrange to (1) repeat the experience or (2) complete (or review) previous sections of the module or other related activities suggested by your resource person before attempting to repeat the final experience.

Options for recycling are also available in each of the learning experiences preceding the final experience. Any time you do not meet the minimum level of performance required to meet an objective, you and your resource person may meet to select activities to help you reach competency. This could involve (1) completing parts of the module previously skipped, (2) repeating activities, (3) reading supplementary resources or completing additional activities suggested by the resource person, (4) designing your own learning experience, or (5) completing some other activity suggested by you or your resource person.

Terminology

Actual Teaching Situation: A situation in which you are actually working with and responsible for teaching secondary or postsecondary vocational students or other occupational trainees. An intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or other occupational trainer would be functioning in an actual teaching situation. If you do **not** have access to an actual teaching situation when you are taking the module, you can complete the module **up to** the final learning experience. You would then complete the final learning experience later (i.e., when you have access to an actual teaching situation).

Alternate Activity or Feedback: An item that may **substitute** for required items that, due to special circumstances, you are unable to complete.

Occupational Specialty: A specific area of preparation within a vocational service area (e.g., the service area Trade and Industrial Education includes occupational specialties such as automobile mechanics, welding, and electricity).

Optional Activity or Feedback: An item that is not required but that is designed to **supplement** and enrich the required items in a learning experience.

Resource Person: The person in charge of your educational program (e.g., the professor, instructor, administrator, instructional supervisor, cooperating/supervising/classroom teacher, or training supervisor who is guiding you in completing this module).

Student: The person who is receiving occupational instruction in a secondary, postsecondary, or other training program.

Vocational Service Area: A major vocational field: agricultural education, business and office education, marketing and distributive education, health occupations education, home economics education, industrial arts education, technical education, or trade and industrial education.

You or the Teacher/Instructor: The person who is completing the module.

Levels of Performance for Final Assessment

N/A: The criterion was not met because it was **not applicable** to the situation.

None: No attempt was made to meet the criterion, although it was relevant.

Poor: The teacher is unable to perform this skill or has only **very limited ability** to perform it.

Fair: The teacher is unable to perform this skill in an acceptable manner but has **some ability** to perform it.

Good: The teacher is able to perform this skill in an **effective** manner.

Excellent: The teacher is able to perform this skill in a **very effective** manner.

Titles of the National Center's Performance-Based Teacher Education Modules

Category A: Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation

- A-1 Prepare for a Community Survey
- A-2 Conduct a Community Survey
- A-3 Report the Findings of a Community Survey
- A-4 Organize an Occupational Advisory Committee
- A-5 Maintain an Occupational Advisory Committee
- A-6 Develop Program Goals and Objectives
- A-7 Conduct an Occupational Analysis
- A-8 Develop a Course of Study
- A-9 Develop Long-Range Program Plans
- A-10 Conduct a Student Follow-Up Study
- A-11 Evaluate Your Vocational Program

Category B: Instructional Planning

- B-1 Determine Needs and Interests of Students
- B-2 Develop Student Performance Objectives
- B-3 Develop a Unit of Instruction
- B-4 Develop a Lesson Plan
- B-5 Select Student Instructional Materials
- B-6 Prepare Teacher-Made Instructional Materials

Category C: Instructional Execution

- C-1 Direct Field Trips
- C-2 Conduct Group Discussions, Panel Discussions, and Symposiums
- C-3 Employ Brainstorming, Buzz Group, and Question Box Techniques
- C-4 Direct Students in Instructing Other Students
- C-5 Employ Simulation Techniques
- C-6 Guide Student Study
- C-7 Direct Student Laboratory Experience
- C-8 Direct Students in Applying Problem-Solving Techniques
- C-9 Employ the Project Method
- C-10 Introduce a Lesson
- C-11 Summarize a Lesson
- C-12 Employ Oral Questioning Techniques
- C-13 Employ Reinforcement Techniques
- C-14 Provide Instruction for Slower and More Capable Learners
- C-15 Present an Illustrated Talk
- C-16 Demonstrate a Manipulative Skill
- C-17 Demonstrate a Concept or Principle
- C-18 Individualize Instruction
- C-19 Employ the Team Teaching Approach
- C-20 Use Subject Matter Experts to Present Information
- C-21 Prepare Bulletin Boards and Exhibits
- C-22 Present Information with Models, Real Objects, and Flannel Boards
- C-23 Present Information with Overhead and Opaque Materials
- C-24 Present Information with Filmstrips and Slides
- C-25 Present Information with Films
- C-26 Present Information with Audio Recordings
- C-27 Present Information with Televised and Videotaped Materials
- C-28 Employ Programmed Instruction
- C-29 Present Information with the Chalkboard and Flip Chart
- C-30 Provide for Students' Learning Styles

Category D: Instructional Evaluation

- D-1 Establish Student Performance Criteria
- D-2 Assess Student Performance: Knowledge
- D-3 Assess Student Performance: Attitudes
- D-4 Assess Student Performance: Skills
- D-5 Determine Student Grades
- D-6 Evaluate Your Instructional Effectiveness

Category E: Instructional Management

- E-1 Project Instructional Resource Needs
- E-2 Manage Your Budgeting and Reporting Responsibilities
- E-3 Arrange for Improvement of Your Vocational Facilities
- E-4 Maintain a Filing System
- E-5 Provide for Student Safety
- E-6 Provide for the First Aid Needs of Students
- E-7 Assist Students in Developing Self-Discipline
- E-8 Organize the Vocational Laboratory
- E-9 Manage the Vocational Laboratory
- E-10 Combat Problems of Student Chemical Use

Category F: Guidance

- F-1 Gather Student Data Using Formal Data-Collection Techniques
- F-2 Gather Student Data Through Personal Contacts
- F-3 Use Conferences to Help Meet Student Needs
- F-4 Provide Information on Educational and Career Opportunities
- F-5 Assist Students in Applying for Employment or Further Education

Category G: School–Community Relations

- G-1 Develop a School–Community Relations Plan for Your Vocational Program
- G-2 Give Presentations to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-3 Develop Brochures to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-4 Prepare Displays to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-5 Prepare News Releases and Articles Concerning Your Vocational Program
- G-6 Arrange for Television and Radio Presentations Concerning Your Vocational Program
- G-7 Conduct an Open House
- G-8 Work with Members of the Community
- G-9 Work with State and Local Educators
- G-10 Obtain Feedback about Your Vocational Program

Category H: Vocational Student Organization

- H-1 Develop a Personal Philosophy Concerning Vocational Student Organizations
- H-2 Establish a Vocational Student Organization
- H-3 Prepare Vocational Student Organization Members for Leadership Roles
- H-4 Assist Vocational Student Organization Members in Developing and Financing a Yearly Program of Activities
- H-5 Supervise Activities of the Vocational Student Organization
- H-6 Guide Participation in Vocational Student Organization Contests

Category I: Professional Role and Development

- I-1 Keep Up to Date Professionally
- I-2 Serve Your Teaching Profession
- I-3 Develop an Active Personal Philosophy of Education
- I-4 Serve the School and Community
- I-5 Obtain a Suitable Teaching Position
- I-6 Provide Laboratory Experiences for Prospective Teachers
- I-7 Plan the Student Teaching Experience
- I-8 Supervise Student Teachers

Category J: Coordination of Cooperative Education

- J-1 Establish Guidelines for Your Cooperative Vocational Program
- J-2 Manage the Attendance, Transfers, and Terminations of Co-Op Students
- J-3 Enroll Students in Your Co-Op Program
- J-4 Secure Training Stations for Your Co-Op Program
- J-5 Place Co-Op Students on the Job
- J-6 Develop the Training Ability of On-the-Job Instructors
- J-7 Coordinate On-the-Job Instruction
- J-8 Evaluate Co-Op Students' On-the-Job Performance
- J-9 Prepare for Students' Related Instruction
- J-10 Supervise an Employer–Employee Appreciation Event

Category K: Implementing Competency-Based Education (CBE)

- K-1 Prepare Yourself for CBE
- K-2 Organize the Content for a CBE Program
- K-3 Organize Your Class and Lab to Install CBE
- K-4 Provide Instructional Materials for CBE
- K-5 Manage the Daily Routines of Your CBE Program
- K-6 Guide Your Students Through the CBE Program

Category L: Serving Students with Special/Exceptional Needs

- L-1 Prepare Yourself to Serve Exceptional Students
- L-2 Identify and Diagnose Exceptional Students
- L-3 Plan Instruction for Exceptional Students
- L-4 Provide Appropriate Instructional Materials for Exceptional Students
- L-5 Modify the Learning Environment for Exceptional Students
- L-6 Promote Peer Acceptance of Exceptional Students
- L-7 Use Instructional Techniques to Meet the Needs of Exceptional Students
- L-8 Improve Your Communication Skills
- L-9 Assess the Progress of Exceptional Students
- L-10 Counsel Exceptional Students with Personal–Social Problems
- L-11 Assist Exceptional Students in Developing Career Planning Skills
- L-12 Prepare Exceptional Students for Employability
- L-13 Promote Your Vocational Program with Exceptional Students

Category M: Assisting Students in Improving Their Basic Skills

- M-1 Assist Students in Achieving Basic Reading Skills
- M-2 Assist Students in Developing Technical Reading Skills
- M-3 Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills
- M-4 Assist Students in Improving Their Oral Communication Skills
- M-5 Assist Students in Improving Their Math Skills
- M-6 Assist Students in Improving Their Survival Skills

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Guide to the Implementation of Performance-Based Teacher Education
Performance-Based Teacher Education: The State of the Art, General Education and Vocational Education

For information regarding availability and prices of these materials contact—AAVIM, American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 120 Driftmier Engineering Center, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, (404) 542-2586

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